

THE BAPTIST Record

JOURNAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION

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Miss. vols brush up on disaster relief

By Tony Martin
Associate Editor

Volunteers from Mississippi Baptist churches across the state gathered at Central Hills Retreat near Kosciusko on April 2-3 for their annual disaster relief training, designed to help them respond to the needs of victims of disasters anywhere in the world.

various disciplines on different work crews. Secondly, volunteers became familiar with the equipment and services of the task force. Thirdly, the group of about 90 volunteers was exposed to new opportunities for ministry.

One highlight was an early morning breakfast in a mock disaster setting prepared by the newly-trained volunteers.

Salvation Army; and a session dealing with volunteers and biological terrorism.

The latter conference, led by Meg Pearson, pharmacy consultant with the Mississippi State Department of Health, captured the attention and interest of the volunteers. Pearson shared the need for volunteers to aid state and local workers in the event of a biological attack across the state.

Pearson spoke of the Strategic National Stockpile, which consists of medical supplies, vaccines, and other equipment. In the event of a Mississippi biological attack, 50 tons of supplies and medicines could be deployed to undisclosed sites in the state within twelve hours. The materials are currently stored in various locations around the U. S., and are the equivalent of seven or eight 18-wheelers.

The "push package" would provide broad spectrum protection for a variety of Category A agents, including smallpox, anthrax, botulism, viral hemorrhagic fever, plague, tularemia, and chemical nerve agents.

Pearson has been charged with the responsibility of securing 10,000 volunteers from across the state. She hopes to draw her initial volunteer core group of 15-20 people from the Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief Task Force.

Southern Baptists field the third largest disaster response team in the country. According to Mickey Caison, manager of adult volunteer mobilization at the North American Mission Board, Southern Baptists participated in 176 disaster responses in 2003 with 12,871 trained volunteers who served 1.5 million meals.

The Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief Force is supported by gifts to the Margaret Lackey State Missions Offering and the Mississippi Cooperative Program. For more information, contact the MBCB Men's Ministry Department at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-2334 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 334. E-mail: cwright@mbcb.org.

MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION

DISASTER RELIEF



2004 TASK FORCE — Over 90 volunteers from Mississippi Baptist Churches across the state participated in Disaster Relief Task Force training April 2-3 at Central Hills Retreat near Kosciusko. The task force is geared to respond to virtually any natural or man-made disaster anywhere in the world, providing thousands of meals each day to disaster victims and assisting in a variety of cleanup and recovery tasks. (BR Photo by Tony Martin)

The Men's Ministry Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, (MBCB) which directs the Baptist disaster relief program in the state, sponsors the training event each year for new and veteran volunteers who wish to serve on the Disaster Relief Task Force.

This year's training served several purposes. First, new volunteers learned what was expected of them as they served in

Breakout conferences included an introduction to the new Task Force workers; an overview of work with the National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA); ham radios; childcare and cultural diversity; chainsaw training; and a CPR update. Other conferences included family and church preparedness; discussions of the relationship between Southern Baptists and the American Red Cross and the

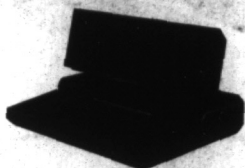
Miss. CP reflects rise

Gifts to the work of the Lord through the Mississippi Cooperative Program (CP) last month exceeded the three million dollar mark for the first time ever in a March reporting period, according to Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board which disburses the funds. It was the seventh-highest Mississippi CP month ever, and marks the third time in four months that CP gifts have exceeded three million dollars. The year-to-date total of \$8,187,040 is 4.71% ahead of prior year gifts through March and 6.14% ahead of current year budget. The 2004 Mississippi CP budget of \$30,854,071 was approved by messengers to the 2003 annual meeting of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. A total of \$2,371,248 is needed each month to meet the convention board's budget for 2004. In addition to supporting more than 10,700 missionaries in the U.S. and around the world through affiliation with the Southern Baptist Convention, Mississippi CP helps fund such programs as regional Bible Drills in a number of locations around the state during April; the Young Musicians Adjudication and Festival April 16-17 at Mississippi College in Clinton; and the State Ministry Assistants' Conference April 19-20 at Camp Garaywa in Clinton.

SBC CP shows increase

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — March receipts for the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Cooperative Program (CP) of \$15,115,122.37 were 6.46%, or \$917,635.99, above the \$14,197,486.38 received in March 2003, according to Morris Chapman, president of the SBC Executive Committee in Nashville. Year-to-date contributions through the Southern Baptist Convention's Cooperative Program are also up 2.52% compared to the same time frame in 2003. As of March 31, 2004, the year-to-date total of \$45,454,884.61 for CP Missions is \$3,127,771.70 above the \$42,327,112.91 received at this same time in 2003. The \$24,362,332.37 in gifts received last month is \$5,940,755.46 above the \$18,421,576.91 of March 2003, a 32.25% increase. For the SBC Cooperative Program Allocation Budget, the year-to-date total of \$45,454,884.61 is 104.71% of the \$91,161,555.00 budgeted, or \$4,293,329.61 above budget to support Southern Baptist ministries globally and across North America. The SBC operates on an Oct. 1-Sept. 30 fiscal year. The Cooperative Program is Southern Baptists' method of supporting missions and ministry efforts of state and regional conventions and the SBC.

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Hail, Prince of Peace!

Every generation likely believes that they lived or are living at the pinnacle of man's inhumanity to his fellow man. The Civil War, where advanced weaponry met outdated tactics, would be one extreme example. There was World War I and the widespread use of devastating chemical warfare. For sheer volume of brutality on a global scale, World War II would be difficult to match.

Today's world situation most probably ranks somewhere close to the top, however, because of the global targeting of innocent non-combatants. We live in a time that allows stateless terrorist groups to move about in the shadows, picking off children.

Nary a day goes by without another report of a homicide bomber somewhere destroying not only himself but everyone around him. Humanitarian workers are slaughtered in cowardly drive-by ambushes. Radical fundamentalists applaud the murders of more than 3,000 people killed on 9/11, and declare that God is glorified by such acts.

Our own home-grown terrorists feel no sympathy for the innocent, in the case of Timothy McVeigh even going to his execution cynically declaring the babies murdered in his bombing of Oklahoma City's Murrah Federal Building were nothing more than "collateral damage."

Meanwhile, the streets of many of our great American metropolises are ruled by ruthless gangs willing to do anything to anybody who stands between them and their wildly lucrative drug business. Police are often outmanned and outgunned, and considered by these people as just another obstacle to be eliminated by whatever means necessary.

Has human life even been worth less? Has human depravity ever gone lower? Have we ever been farther away from our Creator and Father? Perhaps, but there's no doubt the world is in bad shape at the moment.

If we ever needed a Prince of Peace, we need Him this Easter.

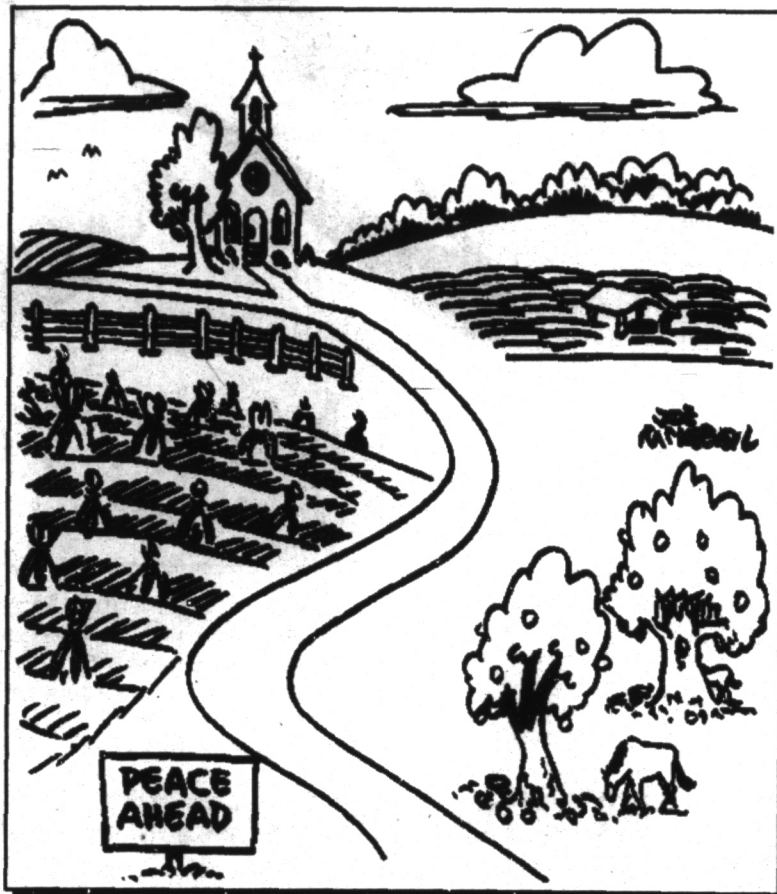
We need a Prince of Peace to still the violence that destroys so many people — many of whom go into eternity without salvation. We need a Prince of Peace to compel combatants to lay down their weapons so food and medicine and the Gospel can get to the people who need it most, because that's inarguably more important than political grievances.

We need a Prince of Peace to teach us that the differences setting us against one another are only skin deep, and that our loving Heavenly Father loves us all. We need a Prince of Peace to show us how to turn the other cheek, and how two wrongs don't make a right.

We need a Prince of Peace to demonstrate for us how we should raise our children and treat our elders, because we no longer seem to have that knowledge. We need a Prince of Peace to intercede for the very young and the very old, who we despise so much for the inconvenience they create.

We need a Prince of Peace to help us overcome the pettiness in our small lives, and invite us to become a part of something much bigger and infinitely more important than ourselves. We need a Prince of Peace to keep us focused on the main thing and deliver us from the snares and distractions of the Evil One: money, power, sex, ego, and self-centeredness, to name only a few.

Thank God we have been given just such a Prince of Peace in Jesus Christ — a Prince of



Happy Easter 2004

Peace who, because he walked among us as one of us, understands us better than we understand ourselves. Thank God we have a Prince of Peace who serves even today as the perfect example of what our Heavenly Father expects of us. Thank God that our Prince of Peace is sufficient to defeat the Evil One and save us from an eternity of damnation.

On this Easter, let us lift our voices in praise to God and Son, and pray that all the people of the world will one day soon know the peace we know that has been so freely given to us by the Savior.

Hail, Prince of Peace!

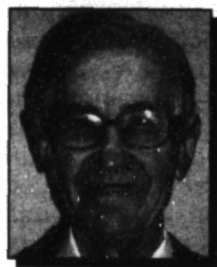
Every generation has its own music, but today contemporary music in many churches is replacing our hymns and Gospel songs. One of the most respected and successful Gospel songwriters, Bill Gaither, said, "While there is a high degree of commitment and passion among this new generation of songwriters, it is not always resulting in enough good and original songs with philosophical and theological content that is worthy to stand the test of time."

Southern Baptists should return to our "heart songs," singing the biblical theology in hymns and using a minimum of the most worthy choruses.

As I travel over the United States leading music workshops for bivocational music leaders in our Baptist churches, I have visited the birthplaces our hymns and Gospel songs. My wife Ashley and I have discussed going overseas for prayerwalking. Recently, I was impressed about putting the two together and calling it, Prayerwalking — Where Hymns Were Born.

I called Chris Mills at the International Mission Board to see what his thoughts were for this ministry. After I shared with him, he immediately

GUEST OPINION:



Remembering the great hymns

By Jimmy McCaleb, consultant
Church Music Department
Miss. Baptist Convention Board

exclaimed, "Wow! I'd like to do that! I will put this on the Internet to our regional missionaries overseas." The first invitation came from Tom and Ann Espy in Wales. Ashley and I interpreted this as the Lord's invitation. We flew to Cardiff, Wales, on May 20, 2003.

The Espy home was our base for three days. Our plan was to visit the places where authors and composers were born or wrote hymnals. Four of the 14 towns we visited were close to the Espy home. The Espys became extremely interested in this prayerwalking concept and wanted to go with us.

We walked on location, praying that hymns would speak to the hearts of the people in those

towns and villages and around the world, and particularly in the United States. We also prayed that these hymns would be sung more often with spiritual depth.

Some hymns written in Wales have become their folk songs. Their most popular hymn, Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah, is enthusiastically sung at soccer and rugby games by all spectators — with beer mugs in hand!

We went to Chapel Rhondda to see the church and organ where John Hughes composed the tune to which we sing, Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah. Philip Rickards, the pastor, told us the history of the church. Later we went to Salem Church a few miles away to Hughes' home church and grave site.

A few days later we went north to Pontycelyn to visit William Williams' birthplace. He wrote the text to Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah, 150 years before John Hughes wrote the tune to which we now sing those words. Williams was a very popular preacher and singer. The historian John Julian referred to him as, "The Sweet Singer of Wales." It is said that Williams was to Wales what Paul Gerhardt was to Germany and Isaac Watts was to England.

A seventh-generation daughter and her family live in Williams' birthplace. She very graciously invited us in to see the beautifully constructed house. Williams was born there and lived there his entire life, even though he traveled through Wales doing evangelistic work for over 50 years.

As I looked at his desk, I felt the power of his most famous hymns. I looked over in the corner of the living room and saw a breathtaking grandfather clock. We commented on its beauty. Williams' great, great, great, great, great, great, great granddaughter softly said, "It was his."

What a thrill, and we were there!

Unborn victims bill becomes law of the land

WASHINGTON (BP) — President George W. Bush's signature on April 1 made it official: federal law now recognizes an unborn child as a victim when he or she is harmed or killed in a crime against a pregnant woman.

The Unborn Victims of Violence Act marks a major turnaround, in that federal law has not treated an unborn child as a victim when he or she dies as a result of an assault against or murder of the mother — even though 29 states have laws that recognize the illegal killing of an unborn child as murder in at least some cases.

"This omission in the law has led to clear injustices," Bush said. "The death of an innocent, unborn child has too often been treated as a detail in one crime but not a crime in itself. As of today, the law of our nation will acknowledge the plain fact that crimes of violence against pregnant woman often have two victims, and therefore, in those cases, there are two offenses to be punished."

Pro-life advocates applauded the president's action. Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission in Nashville, commended Bush for signing a "just and compassionate bill into law."

"This is a significant step forward in reasserting, for the unborn, the legal rights of all human beings," Land said. "It is another reminder we are slowly but surely winning the battle for the hearts and minds of the American public when it comes to the personhood of unborn human beings. We should resolve to continue to pray and work until every unborn child has the same protections under the law that we as adults possess."



DEFENDING THE UNBORN — President George W. Bush signs the Unborn Victims of Violence Act on April 1 as supporters look on (from left): Senators Mike DeWine and Orrin Hatch, Representative Melissa Hart and several individuals from families who have lost unborn children, Carol and Buford Lyons, Sharon Rocha, Ron Grantski, Tracy Marciniak-Seavers, Cynthia Warner, and Stephanie Alberts. (BP photo courtesy of The White House)

Tony Perkins, president of the Family Research Council in Washington, D.C., said it marked a "tremendous victory for the pro-life movement. We are now one giant step closer to rebuilding a culture of life, where every child — born and unborn — is given the protections they so clearly deserve."

Abortion-rights advocates criticized the new law, even though it includes an exception for abortion. They have expressed fear that its recognition of the rights of the unborn would undermine the Supreme Court's 1973 decisions legalizing abortion through all nine months of pregnancy.

"This bill does nothing to protect women from violence — instead, it is designed to establish a precedent that could be used to take away a woman's right to choose," said Vicki

Saporta, president of the National Abortion Federation in Washington, D.C. "The bill President Bush has signed into law today is yet another example of the misleading tactics that opponents of a woman's right to choose are willing to employ."

The president signed the bill during a brief, yet emotionally moving ceremony in the White House. Seven men and women who had lost children and/or grandchildren to violent assaults stood behind Bush as he spoke. When he signed the legislation, they stood closely behind him, their arms around each other or locked together.

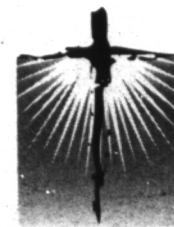
When the president said to them in his eight-minute speech, "thank you all for your courage for coming today," the 180 guests who filled the East Room gave them a prolonged standing ovation.

The measure was named Laci and Conner's Law after the daughter and unborn grandson of Sharon Rocha of Modesto, Calif. Laci Peterson and her unborn son were killed in December 2002 allegedly by her husband, Scott. Rocha had worked for the bill's passage.

Her husband, Ron Grantski, joined her for the ceremony.

Conner's "little soul never saw light, but he was loved, and he is remembered," Bush said, "and his name is forever joined with that of his mom in this statute.... All who knew Laci Peterson have mourned two deaths, and the law cannot look away and pretend there was just one."

Others at the ceremony were Buford and Carol Lyons of Kentucky, whose daughter and unborn grandson were killed; Stephanie Alberts of West Virginia, who lost her daughter and pre-born granddaughter; Cynthia Warner of Minnesota, whose daughter and unborn grandson were slain; and Tracy Marciniak-Seavers of Florida, who lost her pre-born son to an assault.



MISSISSIPPI
BAPTISTS

**THE
SECOND
FRONT PAGE**

Record

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Judge queries abortionist

NEW YORK (BP) — A doctor who is challenging the Partial Birth Abortion Ban Act told a federal judge March 31 he never thinks about whether an unborn child feels pain during an abortion. Judge Richard C. Casey questioned Timothy Johnson of the University of Michigan Health System after cross-examination in the Southern District Court of New York. A trial notebook by American Center for Law and Justice chief counsel Jay Sekulow, who is attending the proceedings daily, recounted the exchange between the judge and doctor on the ACLJ's website. "Does the fetus feel pain?" Casey asked Johnson, referring to a dismemberment procedure in the second trimester. "I have no idea," Johnson answered. "Are you aware that there are studies indicating that the fetus feels pain?" Casey asked. "No, I have not seen those studies," Johnson replied. Casey then asked whether it had ever crossed Johnson's mind as he conducts the procedures whether the fetus feels pain. The doctor hesitated and then said, "No, not really," followed by a mumble. "When you are consulting with a patient prior to the procedure, do you discuss the details that you are going to remove parts of their baby?" Casey asked. "Yes, I do," Johnson said. "Do they ever ask if it hurts?" the judge said. "No, they do not," Johnson answered. "When you describe the procedure, do you tell the patient that the baby's brains will be sucked out?" Casey asked. "No, I do not describe it in those terms. I think I use other terms like cranial collapse," Johnson replied. "You make it nice and palatable, so that they would not understand what it is all about?" Casey asked. "I use medical terminology in order to describe the procedure," he said. Johnson was "visibly shaken" by Casey's questioning, Sekulow said.

Looking back

10 years ago

William B. Tolar, vice president for academic affairs and provost at Southwestern Seminary, is named acting president after the firing of Russell Dilday. Tolar said his acceptance as acting president should not be considered an endorsement of Dilday's March 9 firing by the trustees.

20 years ago

Southern Baptist youths place more importance on the influence of religion in their lives than other youths, according to a recent national survey conducted among 13 denominations and youth-serving agencies, including the Southern Baptist Convention.

50 years ago

A letter to The Baptist Record states: "I take it that had the Holy Spirit wanted a three year rotation of deacons in the church, then the early churches would have practiced it and the Scriptures would not have been silent about it. ...would God call a pastor to preach and then give way three years for a younger man?"

Itawamba BSU takes spring break to MBTS

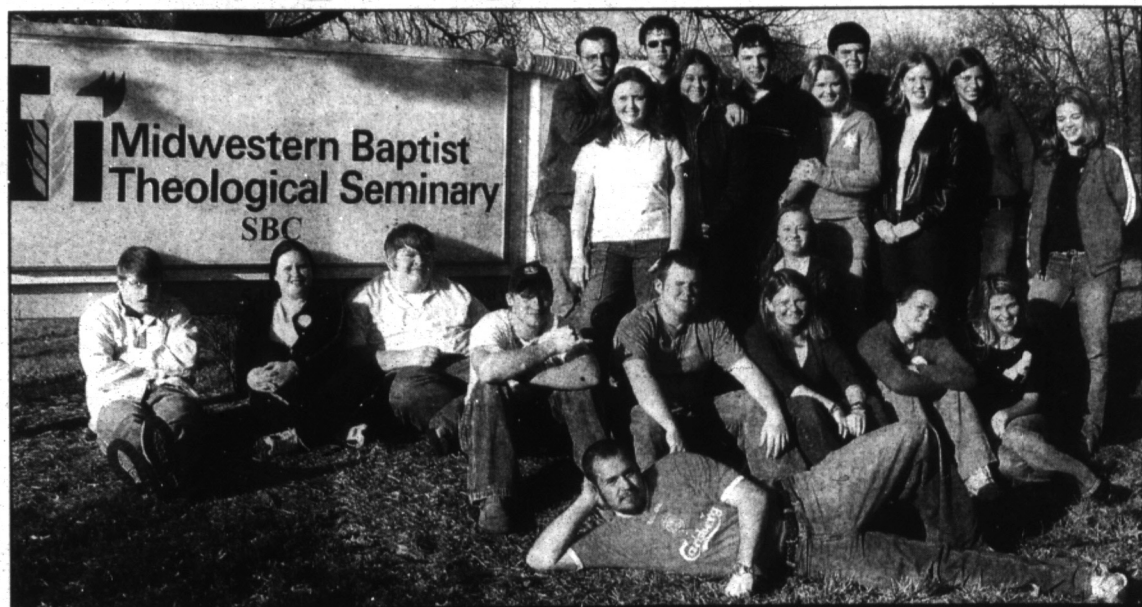
FULTON, Miss. (Special) — No beach was in sight and the suntan oil was absent. What kind of spring break was this?

Welcome to paint brushes, power sprayers, mulch, the smell of paint thinner, and Kansas City. That was the spring break for members of the Baptist Student Union (BSU) at Itawamba Community College (ICC) in Fulton, who spent the time doing physical painting and landscaping at Midwestern Baptist Seminary (MBTS).

"We loved it. This was an opportunity to spend spring break helping someone else instead of spending it just on ourselves," said Jonathan Barnard of Mooreville, the BSU president. "It may not have been the beach, but it was a lot of fun anyway."

The mission trip, financed by support raised by the students and by the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB), also included Dustin Tutor of Pontotoc, Scooter Kellum of Amory, Derek Nelson of Vardaman, Ryan Connelly of Columbus, Caleb Ramey of Mooreville, Walt Barnes of Mantachie, Jay Thomas of Tupelo, Courtney Humphries of Tremont, Amanda Garrett of Aberdeen, Amanda Campbell of Saltillo, Andi Burrows of Dorsey, Kristen Cox of Pontotoc, Stefanie Yielding of Fulton, Charity Barker of Amory, Brandi Watkins of Columbus, Rena Powell of Houlka, Leslie Spears of Thaxton,

and Jordan Simmons of Pontotoc. BSU Director Chris Burrows and Music Leader Emily Comer of Dorsey served as the team leaders. The 2004 trip marked the fourth year for ICC to do the spring break mission trip throughout the United States.



Participants in Itawamba Community College Baptist Student Union mission trip



HAVE BRUSH, WILL TRAVEL — Amanda Garrett of the Itawamba Community College Baptist Student Union paints a stairway rail at Midwestern Baptist Seminary in Kansas City, where the group traveled for a working spring break trip. (BR photo courtesy of Itawamba Community College BSU)

"Every other year we try to use the trip doing physical labor," Burrows said. "We've got students at Itawamba that don't mind doing physical labor and they're good at it. We've done local sweat projects, too. They really enjoyed the opportunity and chance to work with their hands."

Several other Mississippi BSU groups worked throughout the United States — a typical occurrence for spring break.

As for ICC, it was Ken Rhodes, director of missions mobilization for MBCB, who contacted Dennis Roth at Midwestern Seminary about the work potential. Burrows contacted Rhodes, who helped coordinate the details and provide support through Mississippi Baptists.

"We appreciate the financial support of Mississippi Baptists, more than they could know," Burrows said. "One thing that impressed the people at Midwestern was the fact our students and churches in our state paid their own money to come and work. We also provided funds for materials."

The students mulched, repaired, and painted the faculty and administration building parking lot, as well as painted

four of the apartment complexes for family housing at the seminary. Two other Mississippi churches are scheduled to do similar projects later this year.

"The labor that ICC provided was not only quality work but it saved us so much in terms of man-hours and material," Roth said. "That's a huge financial savings for us. Plus, they worked so well and so fast, they actually got more done than we anticipated."

MBTS President Phil Roberts also spoke to the students individually and collectively as the seminary provided a lunch session for the ICC students. However, a couple of the local restaurants in Kansas City got the typical college student workout.

The down time also included a trip through the area to see a few of the city's many fountains, as well as Arrowhead Stadium and Royals Stadium.

"There really wasn't much free time, but what we had, we enjoyed," Amanda Garrett said. "It was definitely a work trip, but we had the opportunity to do something for the Lord and for the Lord's people. That made this a great spring break. It's one we will never forget."

Miss. College students venture to New York City

CLINTON, Miss. (Special) — Seventeen students and two sponsors from Mississippi College (MC) in Clinton ventured to the Big Apple during their 2004 spring break to work with New Hope New York (NHNY), an organization that helps to equip metro area churches for ministry.

Working primarily with a contemporary church called The Journey, these Mississippians were challenged to open their eyes to see the way God is moving in a world far different from the comfortable South.

"I've learned that God can use me anywhere, any time and in any way," said MC freshman Cheryl Byers after returning from New York City.

Mississippi College is affiliated with the Mississippi Baptist Convention and supported by gifts to the Mississippi Cooperative Program.

The team used prayer walking and an outreach tool known as "servant evangelism" to reach New Yorkers. Standing on Manhattan street

corners and in the subway system, they passed out packs of gum, granola bars, and Christian magazines with a flyer about The Journey attached to them.

"Free?" "What's the catch?" "Is it safe?" The responses they received were astonishing.

"People are used to being handed flyers, but they're not used to receiving free things. It completely throws them off guard," said John Troy, director of community outreach for The Journey.

Despite the falling snow and numerous rejections, these students experienced divine appointments and made thousands of contacts before the week was over. Occasionally, a passerby would stop long enough for a conversation to turn into a Gospel presentation.

One such incident occurred as MC students Katie Sheppard and Erica Harms were passing out magazines near a college campus when a pigeon sprinted straight for their heads.

"Erica ducked to the ground in fear, and a man named Joseph

crossing the street laughed hysterically at her," Sheppard said. God used that pigeon, however, to enable Harms to begin a conversation with Joseph that led to him returning to church after 30 years of being out of fellowship with the body of Christ. He left that street corner reading God's Word with a new outlook on life.

"I learned that sometimes we're the ones holding back when others are willing to talk," said Shepherd.

Team member Amanda-Paige Whittington experienced a similar understanding. As she got off the subway for the last time before boarding the airplane to come back home, she noticed a man begging for money to buy a subway pass. Still having a few rides left on her metro card, she handed it to him, but not without also placing a Bible in his hands.

"God's word speaks for itself," Whittington said.

New York City's five boroughs contain more than eight million people, a number that can be overwhelming as a tourist and especially as a missionary.

The team claimed Psalm 67 as their prayer for the week, which is a passage that asks God to show his blessing in order that all nations may know Him.

"So many nations are represented in New York City. We didn't have to leave the country to reach the nations," said Christy Carley, the team's leader.

"New Yorkers are lonely individuals surrounded by crowds of people. I believe that sometimes it took us moving rocks just so other people could plant seeds," Byers said.

As the Mississippi College team experienced the enormous size of the mission field they had entered, they were able to catch a glimpse of the vision of NHNY, and the way God is calling young men and women from all over the United States to play a role in seeing it come to fruition.

"God rocked my world this week," freshman Jenny Savely said. "He can and will use anybody. The need for willing hearts is so big."

Christmas is the season of giving. A thousands times, from October through December, you will hear advertisements and see articles on Christmas being the time of the year when giving seems to be the priority in our hearts. Merchants are keenly aware that if they do not make it at Christmas, they will not make it! Families and friends become aware of the fact that it is important to give the right gift. Now, while Christmas is the season for "giving," it might rightly be said that Easter is the season of "taking."

Easter week, Good Friday, quiet Saturday, and triumphant Easter Sunday is a reflective time when everyone of us ought to give our attention to "taking." **Jesus took our sin and its consequences** when He went to the cross, hung there, bled, and died. He literally became sin. He took all of our sins, all of yours and mine, and the sins of the world, every one of them upon His body. He who knew no sin became sin for us! That is what the Scripture says and it is true.

Now, taking our sins upon Himself, we sometimes do not realize that He took everything about sin - its consequences, the pain, the disruption, the despair, the guilt, and the gloom. Everything that sin brings, Jesus paid for it on the cross! Explore that thought for just a moment with me. Do you realize that every sin has multiple consequences and can hurt scores or thousands of people? Take for instance the sin of murder. One person takes another person's life. Is the con-



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

sequence of that sin simply involving the death that came to one and possibly the capture, prosecution, and imprisonment for the other one? Absolutely not!

Think about what that one sin does to all the relationships of the man who was killed - his parents, wife, children, brothers and sisters, work associates, social relationships, old school buddies, and the Father in Heaven! That's just the beginning. On the other hand, think about how all the people who know and are associated with the murderer. How does his mom and dad deal with such an act? What of the shame that comes to his brothers and sisters? What about his companion, his children, and his friends, and on and on the tentacle of his sin reaches out.

Now, take a sin like adultery, unfaithfulness, that may seem to be so innocent and at times seems to be thrown into the huge wastebasket of "everybody's doing it!" How does it affect people? What are its consequences? Well, obviously it affects more than just two people. Quickly, it affects more than four, eight, sixteen, and soon huge numbers of family and friends quietly shake their heads in bewilderment and wonder.

When Jesus died on the cross, He paid all of our sin debt and made provisions for sin's consequences not to have hold on us. We can be freed and we can have new life in Him. Thanks be to God for Easter and the "taking" Jesus. **He also takes our death and its fear.** The Scripture says that the last enemy that should be destroyed is death. Time and time again we have watched as death has reached down with its icy fingers and snatched away someone we dearly loved. Someone with whom we have laughed, talked, planned, prayed, and shared life - then it is over. We didn't want it to be over. We did not even know how to deal with life's conclusion. Then Jesus comes and takes death and its fear away from us.

Recently, a dear Christian friend who lived a wonderful life for our Lord was coming to the sunset of his days and he asked me, "Do you ever fear death?" I answered him as honestly as I knew how telling him, "No, I do not live in dread and fear of death." Yet, I wanted him to understand that I had not faced death sitting on my front doorstep like he was. Oh sure, I've had close calls and at times I have had things in my life that I wondered if they would spiral into death. But,

God has spared me and filled my life with so many abundant days that I have never had to live with that fear. The day may come when I will. Then I told him that Jesus understands if you do fear death.

The disciples seemed to be as normal and as natural as anyone and they faced death with a twinge of uncertainty and dread. The Lord Jesus Himself looked into the dregs of the cup that would lead to His death and He prayed, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." Easter is the announcement that death and its clutches cannot keep Jesus, nor those who trust in Him! Out of that experience of taking away death and its fear, Jesus comes to give grace sufficient as you face death, and as you go through the steps to arrive at the end and open the door to eternity's beginning. Thank God that Easter is a time of "taking."

Let me share one final thought about what is taken away at Easter. Easter is a time when **Jesus takes away "the end."** Life has a beginning and is marked by "the end." God announced at Easter that for every believer there would come a transition time that may appear to be the end but it would be a beginning.

I was walking through an old country cemetery one day and I came across a grave that had etched in a granite rock, "For the Christian, death is but the door from life to life." That is the Easter story and you and I need to remember, and celebrate, and share that Jesus Christ came at Easter and took away the end and with Him we shall reign forever, and ever. Halleluia!

Flake Celebration slated for First, Winona

All Mississippi Baptists are invited to attend the Worship Celebration of the Arthur Flake Sunday School Growth Strategy at First Church, Winona, beginning at 6:30 p.m. on April 13.

Flake, the Mississippi Baptist who pioneered Southern Baptist Sunday School work, developed his Standard Sunday School plan while in Winona. His book, *Building a Standard Sunday School*, serves as the foundation of Sunday School methodology to this day.

"As we gather at First Church, Winona, we will launch a strategy for church growth for Mississippi Baptists which we pray will change the course of life in Mississippi Baptist churches," said Kiely Young, director of the Sunday School Department at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

For more information, contact Young at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3291 or toll-free outside Jackson at (800) 748-1651, ext. 291. E-mail: cday@mbcb.org.

McDonnall describes first minutes after ambush

DALLAS (BP) — Along one wall of Carrie McDonnall's hospital room, arms and hands made out of construction paper reach out, as though inviting a hug. Between the arms, messages of love and encouragement nestle, lovingly written by children from Cedar Ridge Church in Thomasville, N.C.

These "hugs" are especially appropriate for Carrie, herself a "hugger," and they reflect the loving care God has provided since the attack in Mosul, Iraq, on March 15 that took the life of her husband David and three other humanitarian aid workers with the International Mission Board.

The first demonstration of God's care for her came as three Iraqi men whom she didn't know overcame Islamic cultural taboos to pull her from the vehicle and support her crumpled, bleeding body in a taxi as it raced to the hospital.

Muslim men are not permitted to touch women who are not family members, "but these men treated me like a sister," Carrie said. "They made sure my skirt covered my ankles. They kept me modest."

One man gently stroked her hair, brushing it back from her face, comforting her while the others helped stabilize her shattered leg and arm during the trip.

At the hospital, U.S. military personnel were called in, and Carrie questioned the first soldiers who arrived. "Do you believe in Jesus?" she asked. "Pray for us."

As doctors worked on both her and David, two of the soldiers dropped to their knees and began praying for them. When Carrie arrived in the States, still under heavy sedation, her parents prayed specifically that the medical team selected to work with her would include believers.

"I knew believers [in Jesus] would understand" why she had been in Iraq and her need for prayer, said Margaret Taylor, Carrie's mother. "The others wouldn't."

One of the doctors Taylor identified early as a believer. "He paused in the doorway and seemed to pray with us" when Carrie arrived, Taylor said, "and let us know Carrie would be in God's hands."

About a week later, his responsibilities with Carrie complete, this doctor told Taylor that he'd been called to medical missions as a 12-year-old and intends to fulfill that call when he retires. Early on, another doctor identified himself as a member of First Church in Dallas and assured Carrie that he and his wife were praying for her.

"God has put her with people who have supported her physically, but also spiritually," Taylor said.

"I have felt the prayers," Carrie said. "We've been receiving cards and notes from people all over the United States. And God is hugging me through His Word." She had been reading in 2 Corinthians before the attack and the succeeding chapters, plus references to Isaiah, have been particularly appropriate for the challenges she is facing.



RECOVERING — Carrie McDonnall (right), shown in a video taped in Iraq with her husband David before they were ambushed near Mosul, continues recovering at a Dallas hospital from injuries sustained in the March 15 drive-by attack. David McDonnall was killed in the hail of automatic gunfire, along with Karen Watson and Larry and Jean Elliott. All five workers were in Iraq under the auspices of the International Mission Board. (BP photo courtesy of IMB)

Carrie underwent surgery March 30 for a skin graft on her left leg and to have a plate put in her right forearm, which will provide additional support for bones shattered in the attack. She suffered serious injuries in all four limbs.

"I am improving daily, by God's grace and His healing hands on my body."

Resolutions period opens on April 15

DALLAS (BP) — The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Resolutions Committee is now accepting proposed resolutions for the 2004 SBC annual meeting in Indianapolis.

In keeping with an amendment to SBC Bylaw 20 approved during the 2002 SBC annual meeting in St. Louis, the procedure is as follows:

- Proposed resolutions may be submitted as early as April 15 but no later than 15 days prior to the SBC annual meeting, giving the Resolutions Committee a two-week period in which to consider submissions. Resolutions may no longer be submitted during the annual meeting.

- Proposed resolutions must be accompanied by a letter from a church qualified to send a messenger to the SBC annual meeting certifying that the individual submitting the resolution is a member in good standing.

- Proposed resolutions preferably should be submitted by e-mail or mailed to the Resolutions Committee in care of the SBC Executive Committee. The drafts must be typewritten, titled, and dated, and must include complete contact information for the person and his or her church.

- No person will be allowed to submit more than three resolutions per year.

- If a properly submitted resolution is not forwarded by the Resolutions Committee to the SBC annual meeting, a two-thirds vote of messengers would be required to bring the proposed resolution to the convention floor.

All resolutions adopted by the SBC can be searched and read on the Web at <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/AMResSearch.asp>.

JUST FOR THE RECORD

Woodland Hills Church, Jackson, will hold an Easter Sunrise Service April 11. Visitors are invited to join the congregation in front of the Old Canton Road church entrance at 6:15 a.m. Morning worship begins at 10:45 a.m. and evening worship begins at 6 p.m. Tyler Pigott is pastor.

Benton Church, Benton, will host a joint Easter worship service with the Benton United Methodist Church on April 11 at 7 a.m. with a break-

fast fellowship following. The regular worship service will be held at 9 a.m. Charles Moore is pastor. For more information, call (662) 673-9708.

The sanctuary choir of **Daniel Memorial Church, Jackson,** will present the musical Evidence of Grace April 9 at 6:30 p.m. Jerry Sager, minister of music, will be directing. Steve Potts, pastor, and Katrina Marler will narrate.

REVIVALS & HOMECOMINGS

Hopewell, Little Rock: Revival April 12-16; nightly at 7 p.m.; Don Taylor, Harvest Time Ministries, Conehatta, evangelist; Steve and Becky Carver, One Way Ministries, Mathiston, music; Jimmy McDill, pastor.

Liberty, Lauderdale: Homecoming May 2; a fellowship meal will follow services; Michael Gibson, pastor; for more information, call (601) 626-0095.

Bunker Hill, Goss, and Cedar Grove, Columbia: Revival April 18-23; Sunday, 6 p.m.; Mon.-Fri., 7 p.m.; Shannon Marshall, evangelist; Steven Walker, music; Bunker Hill, April 18 and 19; Goss, April 20 and 21; Cedar Grove, April 22 and 23.

New Hope, Foxworth: Tent Revival April 25-28; Sunday, 11 a.m. and 7 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Paul Blanchard, evangelist; Mark Thompson, music; Tim Parker, pastor.

Crowder, Crowder: Homecoming April 25; no Sunday School; worship, 10:30 a.m.; lunch will follow; Harvey Sewell, Wallerville, Wallerville, speaker; Wayne Baggett, Southside, Decatur, Ala., music; special music, New Spirit, and Wayne and Peggy Baggett.

Spring Creek, Philadelphia: Revival April 18-21; Sunday, 6 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Randy Isbell, evangelist; Wayne King, pastor.

Liberty Hill, Pope: Revival April 18-21; Sunday, 11 a.m.; nightly, 7 p.m.; Bryan Bailey, Yellow Leaf, Oxford, preaching; Robert Shaw, West Marks, Marks, music; all are welcome.

First, Maben: One Day Revival April 18; worship, concerts, and meals; David Platt, New Orleans, La., evangelist; Kevin Williams, Columbus, musician; Tommy Temple, pastor.

STAFF CHANGES



Williams

Prospect Church and Hazel Church, Newton County.

Steele Church, Forest, called Reggie Williams as pastor effective March 15. Williams previously pastored

COLLEGE & SEMINARY NEWS

Etchings on Biblical Themes are on display in the Lucile Parker Gallery, Hattiesburg Campus, William Carey College. This exhibit of small prints by Joan M. Bohlig will begin March 25 and continue through May 7. The exhibit can be viewed during gallery hours, 1-4 p.m. Monday-Friday, or by appointment, (601) 318-6192.

8:30 a.m. Pre-registration is \$15 for the general public and \$10 for WCC students.

Registration is \$20 on race day. Prizes will be awarded in each of the six age groups. For more information, call (601) 318-6771 or (601) 318-6444.



Bohlig

William Carey College will host the 20th Annual

Co-Opera Hattiesburg, a new educational project consisting of faculty and students from William Carey College and the University of Southern Mississippi, will present the musical Into the Woods in the Mannoni Performing Arts Center on the USM Hattiesburg campus. Matinee hours are available for middle and senior high school classes April 14 and 15 at 9:30 a.m. Tickets are \$5 each and can be reserved by calling (601) 318-6180 or by emailing connie.roberts@wmcarey.edu. Public performances are April 16 and 17 at 7:30 p.m. and April 18 at 2:30 p.m. For reservations or information, call (601) 266-6725. Tickets are \$16 for general admission and \$8 for students.

Conference on the Elderly Mississippian with a Mental Handicap April 30 from 9 a.m.-4:45 p.m. in the Thomas Fine Arts Building, Hattiesburg campus. Registration of \$25 includes workshops, lunch, and performances. Registration sheets are available at the Hattiesburg Public Library or by contacting Paul Cotton, 498 Tuscan Avenue, Hattiesburg, MS 39401, or call (601) 318-6416. Walk-ins will be charged an additional \$5.

William Carey College on the Coast will host 100 college and high school student volunteers working for Habitat for Humanity in the Gulfport area March through June. Students from William Carey College, Mississippi University for Women, University of Wisconsin, University of St. Thomas, University of Alabama, Clarksdale High School, and Calvary United Methodist Church will use WCC a base of operations while building homes in the area.



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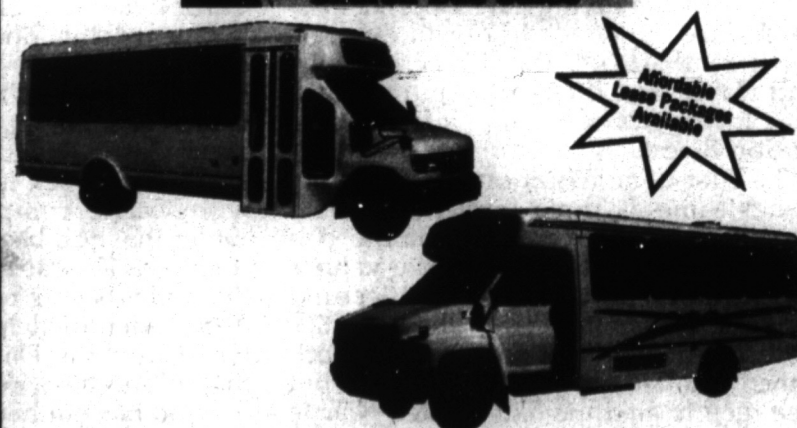
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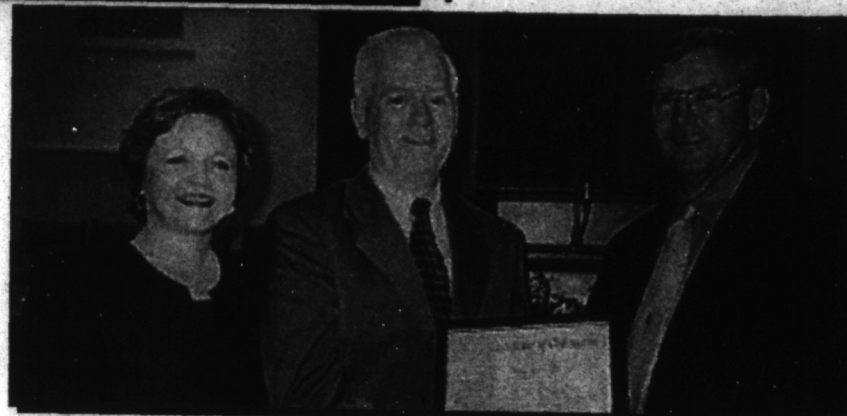
JUST FOR THE RECORD



Debbie & Mark Ford and Buddy Keys, pastor

First Church, Richton, ordained **Mark Ford** to the ministry February 22. Pictured (from left) are his wife Debbie, Ford, and Buddy Keys, pastor. Ford has been called as pastor of Good Hope Church, Richton.

First Church, Richton, ordained **Don Morgan**, minister of music, education, and senior adults, February 15. Pictured (from left) are his wife Jan, Morgan, and Buddy Keys, pastor.



Jan & Don Morgan and Buddy Keys, pastor



Rock Hill Church New Members Class, Mount Olive

Rock Hill Church, Mt. Olive, presented certificates to (pictured, from left) Lila Kelly, Sam Sanford, Mary Heinsz, Misty Munn, and Tony Munn for completing the New Christian Class. Marcus Burnham is pastor.

The youth of Rock Hill Church, Mt. Olive, raised \$543.11 and collected paper products for the Baptist Children's Village. Kathleen Burnham presented the check to Chrystelle Thames.



Rock Hill Church Youth, Mount Olive

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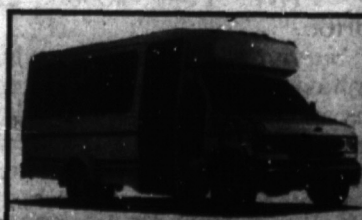
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First, Petal sells facility to schools

Members of First Church, Petal, voted February 29 to sell the church's facility on West Central Avenue to the Petal School District, which plans to convert the property into a preschool center.

"When all the votes were counted up, it was unanimous. We all felt that God spoke through us and directed us to accept the offer," said church building committee chairman Gary Fordham in a March 1 article in The Hattiesburg American newspaper. The school district will purchase the church for \$532,500. Bond told the newspaper.

First Church, Petal, is constructing a new facility on Mississippi Highway 42.

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JUST FOR THE RECORD



Paynes Church Valentine Banquet, Charleston



BYW Organization of Mt. Horeb, Collins



Children of First Church, Brandon

Knight, Bryna Brown, Karen Sanford, Lodie Knight, and Emily Beach.

Liberty Church, Lauderdale Association, held a deacon ordination for **Mike Culpepper** January 18. Pictured (from left) are Michael Gibson, pastor, Culpepper, and his wife Janet.

West End Church, West Point, recently ordained **Jason Middleton** to the ministry. Middleton serves as pastor of Cedar Bluff Church, Cedarbluff. He is a full time student at Blue Mountain College majoring in Church Related Vocations. Pictured (from left) are Curtis Middleton, Terry Partin, Middleton, and Mike Mathena.

project. Twelve adults and children gave away soft drinks, water, and information about their church to the parents of Rouse Elementary as they waited in the car rider line. There were 250 drinks were distributed.

a breakfast to raise money for Anne Armstrong Easter Offering. Pictured (from left, bottom) are Kelly Perkins, Cindy Hosey, Tracy Kendrick, Pamela Aycock, (top) Cindy Reid, Wanda Baker, Wanda

First Church, Bay St. Louis, held a groundbreaking March 21 for their Multi-Purpose Building. The building cost is \$590,000. Pictured (from left) are Ron Magee, Brian Rushing, John Bolian, Pat Favre, Ben Dedeaux, Mark Thomas, Dave Boos, Troy Rutledge, and Al Green, pastor.

Mt. Horeb Church, Collins, has reorganized their BYW organization. Since January, they have donated to the Sheltered Woman's Home, Laurel, and organized

Paynes Church, Charleston, recently held a Valentine Banquet for their senior citizens. The king and queen, Buddy Shook, 94, and his wife Lillie Shook, 97, were crowned.

First Church, Brandon, recently conducted a city mission



Michael Gibson, pastor; Mike & Janet Culpepper



M. Middleton, T. Partin, J. Middleton, and M. Mathena



First Church Ground Breaking, Bay St. Louis

Bibliocipher

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XJU BRNMN XJNARIZJO
NXZU MJCD CERQ, CERH
CFXC XIR AEDGR JRRU
JDC X LEHNZVZXJ; WMC
CERH CEXC XIR NZVF.
GMFR KZSR: CEZICH-DJR

Clue: Z = I

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: John 8:24

OBITUARY

James E. Watts, 75, a retired minister, died suddenly March 23 at Scott Regional Hospital, Morton. Services were held March 26 at Springfield Church, Morton, with burial in the church cemetery.

Watts was a native of Brookhaven and a graduate of West Lincoln High School, Clarke College, William Carey College, and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

After entering the full-time ministry, he served more than forty years as a pastor in the following churches: Prospect Church, Richton; Runnelstown Church, Runnelstown; Harmony Church, Brookhaven; Antioch Church, Monticello; Swiftwater Church, Greenville; Bethel Church, Rayville; Arkadelphia Church, Meridian; New Prospect Church, Brookhaven; Springfield Church, Morton; Temple

Church, Jackson; and Branch Church, Morton. He retired at Branch Church in 1998. He remained active preaching at area churches until his death.

Prior to entering the ministry, Watts served his country in the Army from 1954-1956. While stationed in Hawaii, he served as a volunteer associate pastor at Waikiki Church in Honolulu, which at the time was a foreign mission field.

He was an active member of the V.F.W. Post #5586 at Morton.

Survivors include his wife, Winifred (Winnie) Watts, Morton; sons and wives, Don and Estelle Watts, Pearl, and David and Shelia Watts, Morton; sister Dorothy Pickering, Natchez; brother A.C. Watts, Tulsa, Okla.; four grandchildren, Amy and Eric Watts, Pearl, and Alex and Jeremy Watts, Morton; and a number of nieces and nephews.

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GRANDVIEW BAPTIST CHURCH, 900 S. Pearson Road, Pearl, Miss., seeks bi-vocational minister of music. Call (601) 939-4215.

SEEKING PART-TIME MINISTER of music and youth for Furr's Baptist Church, Pontotoc, Miss. Please send resumes to Bobbie Jagers, 5279 Hwy 6 E, Pontotoc, MS 38863.

WEST LAUREL BAPTIST CHURCH, is accepting applications for full-time

pastor. Masters degree and five (5) years experience preferred. Send resume and letter of interest to: West Laurel Baptist Church, 1400 W. 5th Street, Laurel, MS 39440, attn: Mel Odom, by May 29, 2004.

EAST MOSS POINT BAPTIST CHURCH in Moss Point, Miss., is seeking a full-time pastor. Please mail resume to: pastor search committee, 7842 Misty Meadow Drive, Moss Point, MS 39563.

POSITION AVAILABLE: FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, MAGNOLIA, Miss., 126 South Clark St., Magnolia, MS 39652, Pike Association. Now seeking resumes for full or part-time youth minister. Call (601) 783-3391.

JUST FOR THE RECORD

Holly Church, Corinth, recently held a youth valentine banquet, Memories. They went down memory lane to the 50s and 60s to JC's diner, fun music, skits, and reminders of who first loved us. Pictured are the youth. Tony Morrow is pastor.



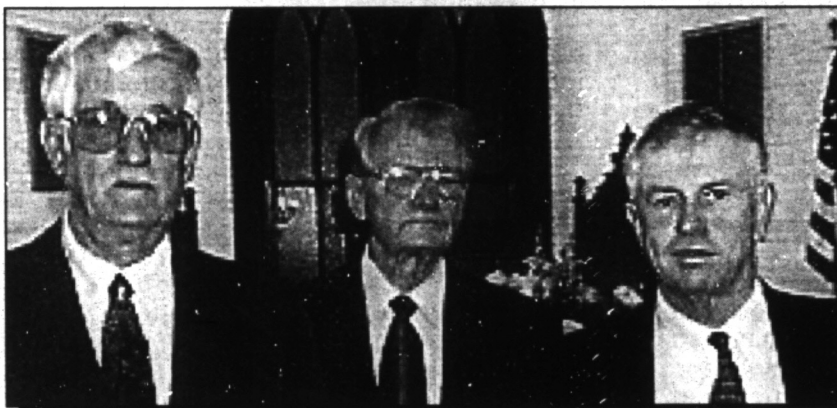
Holly Church, Corinth Youth Valentine Banquet

First Church, Leakesville, held a deacon ordination February 22. Pictured (from left) are Dale Younce, interim pastor, Woodrow and Claressa Rustin, Charles and Brenda Bell, and James and Nancy Brewer.



Leakesville Church Deacon Ordination, Leakesville

Friendship Church, Aberdeen, recently entered into a partnership with Ebenezer Church, New York City, N.Y., through New Hope New York. Pictured is the covenant signing between Friendship and Ebenezer on March 7 (from left, front) are Ana Panameno, Julio Panameno, pastor of Ebenezer, Todd Bowen, pastor of Friendship, Joni Bowen, (back) Jerry Garrett, Hal Bourland, Jr., Sid Herndon, Billy Miller, Sr., Ken Blanton, and Bill Edwards, Sr.



Robinson Church Deacon Ordination, Liberty

Christ of Passion April 11 at 10 a.m. Services will be held at the Rankin County Multi-Purpose Pavilion. For more information, call (601) 825-2562.

Spring Hill Church, Oakland, recently hon-

ored Lewis Brewer for 47 years of dedicated service as a deacon. Pictured with Brewer is his wife, Elwanda.



Friendship Church, Aberdeen

The Church of the Highlands, Ridgeland, will present Fresh Beginnings, a women's conference, April 16 and 17. Times are Friday from 7-9 p.m. and Saturday beginning at 9 a.m. DeLynn Rizzo will lead. Admission is free. Childcare will be provided.



Lewis and Elwanda Brewer

Auburn Church, Tupelo, held a note burning ceremony for their new sanctuary and family life center February 29.

Pictured (in the middle) are Ronny Kimbrough, Michael Dickerson, and members of Auburn for 40 plus years.



Auburn Church Note Burning, Tupelo

Holly Church, Corinth, recently observed Baptist Men's Day with a special men's choir and guest speaker David Dodd who issued a challenge to step forward for Christ.

Robinson Church, Liberty, ordained Aubrey Travis and George Glass as deacons February 29. Pictured (from

left) are Travis, Chubby Lowery, pastor, and Glass.

Crossgates Church, Brandon, will celebrate The



Holly Church Men's Day, Corinth

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Major leaguers see movie as outreach tool

KISSIMMEE, Fla. (BP) — Churches aren't the only ones renting out theaters and using Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* as an outreach tool. Baseball players are doing the same thing.

Mike Matheny of the St. Louis Cardinals invited not only his teammates on the big league team, but also the minor leaguers and their wives. "We have Bible studies, and I think this is going to be a good first study and kind of open the doors to everybody," Matheny said. "I know that people are going to ask questions."

Matheny was hopeful that both the movie and his gesture would be received well by his teammates. "One, the movie's powerful enough that it's going to speak for itself," Matheny said. "Two, maybe they see the commitment of me renting out a theater and that may get them to ask some questions why this means so much, and I'd love the opportunity to share with them why it does."

Houston Astros owner Drayton McLane, a Southern Baptist deacon, wanted his players to see the movie, but he

also knew that his involvement might keep some players away. So, he enlisted the help of outfielder Lance Berkman, the self-proclaimed "ticketmaster" for the event.

"I don't think necessarily it's a great evangelistic tool, other than it's an icebreaker, it's a topic of conversation — kind of a segue into presenting the Gospel," Berkman said. "I think really it would have an impact on the lukewarm believer or the nominal Christian."

Berkman added that the movie was "a hot topic of conversation in the locker room" for a couple of days afterward,



Matheny

and McLane said he was pleased with the outcome.

"It seemed to have a real impact on many of them," McLane said.

Houston shortstop Adam Everett was one of those who went with his team to see the movie.

"It was powerful," Everett said. "I don't know if there's another word to describe it. If you didn't

come out of there teary-eyed, I felt like there was something wrong, because I came out of there teary-eyed. You can't really imagine what (Jesus) did for us."

"I just felt like it was an opportunity to get some guys to go that maybe could ask

some questions afterward," said New York Mets pitcher Braden Looper during spring training in Florida. "It was a great outreach. I think we had like 50 guys and their wives show up."

Looper arranged for their teammates to see the movie during spring training by renting out a movie theater or by handing out free tickets.

Atlanta Braves pitcher John Smoltz had a glowing review of the film. "It is the most defining movie for what we stand for and what we believe," Smoltz said. "The Gospel was not compromised at all for the sake of Hollywood."

Most of his teammates went to the movie the night Smoltz rented the theater, and he thinks *The Passion* will continue to have a significant impact on those who see it for a long time. "It should force Christians to live a life filled with passion and joy for their salvation," Smoltz said.

"God's glory will shine through this movie," he said. "The financial investment was nothing compared to the life changing opportunities."

Team chaplain: Pitcher a 'shining example' of faith

LAKELAND, Fla. (BP) — From a baseball perspective, last year was a season Mike Maroth would like to forget. The lefty lost 21 games for the Detroit Tigers, the most losses for a Major League pitcher since Brian Kingman lost 20 games for Oakland in 1980.

The Tigers, as a whole, turned in a dismal 43-119 record but from a spiritual perspective, Maroth is grateful for the season that would give other pitchers nightmares. He says it sharpened his faith and allowed him to display that faith for others to see.

"The best thing that happened, probably, was that people kept an eye on me," Maroth said. "They wanted to see how I handled it."

Maroth didn't let the losing get to him, although he admits it was a struggle all season long, both personally and collectively as a team. Losing is no fun for ballplayers — Maroth included — and the Detroit clubhouse wasn't a happy place most of the time.

"I think everybody knew that it was going to be a pretty hard year last year, being so young," said Maroth, an Orlando native who attends church at Windermere (Fla.) First Baptist Church. "We didn't know what to expect, but nobody expected that we were going to go through what we did."

Jeff Totten, the baseball chapel leader for the Detroit Tigers, said Maroth was a shining example of faithfulness throughout the season. "Mike was very faithful throughout the entire year, faithful to Christ and faithful to his teammates and his profession," Totten said. "It took some courage and some humility at

times to remain faithful in those situations. In every situation he never stopped trying to live for Christ."

His reliance on God is what got him through the difficult season, and Maroth took comfort in verses like James 1:2-3 that promise God's presence in the midst of trials. He knew that despite the hard times,

God was still with him and hadn't abandoned him.

"God doesn't look at the numbers, for one thing," Maroth said. "I strongly believe that when we go through trials and struggles, there's something for us to learn. God's trying to teach us something or get our attention. I had to really stay close to the Lord during that time so I didn't start falling away. It's so easy for us as Christians to all of a sudden turn the other way when we're going through struggles

Maroth

and look the other way and try to do it on our own."

He certainly had the opportunity to do it on his own, when Tigers manager Alan Trammell approached Maroth about shutting down the season prematurely to avoid reaching the dreaded 20-loss mark. Trammell said he was still confident in Maroth's ability as a pitcher, especially since Maroth kept the Tigers in the game when he was on the mound, but he left the decision up to Maroth.

Maroth politely declined Trammell's offer. "I said I wanted to keep pitching," Maroth said. "This is where I'm supposed to be. This is where God placed me. If I was to quit or decide I'm going to stop, that would have been my decision and not God's decision. That's the way I look at it. God had put me in that situation and he didn't want me to back out. I was going to go full force. He knew what was going to happen. He had it planned out."

As Maroth and the Tigers prepare for a new season, the players have gladly left 2003 behind them. The Tigers added a couple of veterans during the off-season by signing Ivan Rodriguez and Fernando Vina, and Maroth said the mood in the clubhouse this spring is totally different from last year.

"We're so much improved," he said. "The mood in the clubhouse is a lot more upbeat. Everybody seems to be more relaxed."

On the field, Maroth doesn't have any specific goals for the new season except to stay healthy and to give the team a chance to win every time he plays. As a pitcher, he knows that the outcome of a game is largely beyond his control.

"The only stat that I know I can control are walks, because I'm the one that throws the ball," he said. "If I don't throw it over the plate, of course it's going to equal walks."

Off the field, he also hopes he can build on what he established last year with his teammates. Totten said he heard comments by many players — even those who don't profess to be Christians — about how much they respected Maroth for the way he handled himself last year. Many of the Tigers saw someone of character and faith who faces trials gracefully, and Maroth is optimistic that will open even more doors for him to witness to others.

"Last year, being able to see God work around me really helped me get through the year," he said. "It gave me a lot of opportunities to talk about my faith. From that standpoint, I look at it as great."

Jesus Christ

Requests the Honor
of Your Presence
in Heaven!

YOU CAN RESPOND
RIGHT NOW!

Simply share the following
prayer with God in
your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you.
(I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death.
(I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you.
(I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him.
(I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name
(John 1:12).

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

FAMILY BIBLE STUDY

Risen Lord

Matthew 28:1-10; Ephesians 2:4-9

By Patsy Foster

The chief priests and Pharisees were nervous after the death of Jesus. Going to Pilate, they asked him to "command that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night and steal Him away, and say to the people, He has risen from the dead" (Matt. 27:64 NKJV). Every precaution was taken to make sure that Jesus remained dead in the tomb, but Heaven had another plan.

Early on Sunday morning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. Imagine their amazement when they arrived there and found the stone rolled away, and an angel, with a countenance like lightning and raiment as white as snow, sitting on the stone. The guards were so overwhelmed with fear

that they shook and became like dead men. The angel spoke to the women, "Do not be afraid for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here: He has risen, just as He said. Come and see the place where He lay" (Matt. 28:5-6 NIV). What joy and light must have seeped into their souls as they realized the meaning of the empty tomb: Their Lord was alive!

Have you ever been overflowing with good news and there was no one nearby for you to share it with? It's difficult to keep good news to yourself. Immediately, the angel urged the two women to go quickly and tell his disciples that He was risen from the dead. "So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy..." (Matt.



Foster

28:8). Before they could find the disciples, however, they encountered the risen Lord. When He greeted them, they fell before Him in worship. Picture the scene: They had witnessed the horror of his crucifixion and had grieved that He was dead. Now, here He was, alive! Jesus told them to continue on where they were going. He said, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me" (Matt. 28:10 NIV). It's interesting that Jesus chose women to be the first witnesses of the resurrection. Had the empty tomb been a premeditated deception by Jesus' followers, women would never have been chosen as witnesses because of their low standing in that society. Men would have been considered more credible witnesses, yet our Lord chose to use the women who had stood faithfully with Him during the dark hours of Golgotha. Eagerly they went forward to share their good news. The cross was behind them now.

They could face the future. Their Lord hadn't perished. He had overcome the forces of death and Hell once and for all.

By the greatness of His power, God raised Jesus Christ from the dead, and that same power now makes us alive when we trust in Christ. God, "even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:5-6). Jesus wrote an invitation with His blood, inviting all who would believe on Him, to be saved by His grace. That's not just good news. That's vital news-life changing news. The Lord still calls people. He calls sinners to repentance and He calls His people to bear witness continually that the tomb is empty, that our Savior is alive, that He lives in our hearts and moves in our lives.

In the early church, tradition says that believers would greet each other with the joyful greeting of "Christ is risen." The

response to that was, "He is risen indeed." Gardner C. Taylor, senior pastor emeritus of the Concord Baptist Church of Christ, Brooklyn, New York, writes, "The resurrection tiding is far and away the most astonishing news to ever break across the tired, old face of this earth. No book ever had a climax of such triumph as that one recorded in all four gospels, which is why that greeting and response became the identifying salutation of the Christian community and why those words set men and women singing at their tasks, why they gave meaning to daily living and why they opened long vistas of vast possibilities to those sinking beneath life's ever-heavier load" (www.ptm.org/99PT/MarApr/ChristIsRisen.htm).

Many in our stress-filled world are sinking beneath ever-heavier loads. They need to hear that Christ is risen indeed and that He still gives meaning to life.

Foster is member of Murphy Creek Church, Louisville.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Resurrection

Matthew 28

By Bobby McKay

There has been more talk of Christ this Easter season than ever before. This is largely because of the motion picture *The Passion of the Christ*. At the time of this writing the movie was well on its way to grossing 400 million dollars and becoming one of the most watched movies of all time. We forget sometimes that the death of Christ was a real event in our world history and not some fairy tale in the life of Jesus.

What makes Easter the vital issue of our faith is that we serve a Savior that is alive and dwells within us! If you don't believe that fact my friends please call your pastor, because you aren't saved. Sadly many of us say that we believe Jesus is alive with our lips, but our actions speak

otherwise. Don't go through this life cantankerous and always negative about everything. Jesus is alive, He really is! That alone should put a song in our hearts and a smile on our face.

Our Sunday School Lesson is taken from the Matthew 28 account of the Easter story. There are three very different and interesting stories that we see in this chapter. Grab your Bible; there are some really good things here for us to see together.

I. THE COMING OF THE WOMEN TO THE TOMB (28:1-10)

In verses one through 10 the Word tells us about the two women that went to the tomb. We cannot fathom their hurts, fears, or anxieties that morning as they approached grave site. Their sadness



McKay

quickly turned to wonder and amazement when they reached their destination. The angel of the Lord share with them that Jesus isn't there but He has risen, just as He said He would.

Fellow believer, do you know at this point in your life that God will always keep His word? He has to. He will not break a promise that He has made.

Look at verse seven. I don't want you to misunderstand what I am about to say. It says, "And go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold, He is going before you into Galilee, there you will see Him; behold, I have told you" (NASB). It has always been awesome to see how God used women in this story. Many people today are having heated arguments about what a woman's role in ministry is. I am in no way advocating women pastors, so don't call and chew me out. What I am saying is that God used women as the original sharing of the good news or the Gospel.

They were the first ones that told the 11 disciples that the Christ they thought was dead was indeed alive.

Following verse seven we see that the women are obedient. The Bible tells us in verses eight and nine that the women had great joy and were running to report it to the disciples when Jesus showed up! In verse 10 he reaffirms what the angel told them. I can only imagine that after seeing the risen Christ, the women could have beaten Carl Lewis in a race. Let me ask all of us a question. Are we running to tell others about Christ?

II. THE CROOKEDNESS OF THE ELDERS (28:11-15)

This is a passage that is very interesting. As the women were running to the disciples, we see a shady deal occurring. After getting there composure back, the guards went to the elders and reported all that had happened. In turn, the elders gave them "A large sum of money" to lie and say that the disciples had stolen his body while they slept. It's sad

to see since the first Easter morning people were being used by the Devil to deny the facts of the resurrection.

II. THE COMMISSION GIVEN (28:16-20)

Lastly we see what is commonly called the Great Commission. It is not the Great Suggestion or the Great Opinion. Jesus is Lord and these are our marching orders. Like a lot of churches, Spring Hill has a vision statement and goals that we strive to reach. It doesn't matter what your vision or purpose statement is if you don't make the Great Commission a top priority.

You see, only the Son of God could give this Commission and rest assured He will bless your church beyond anything you can imagine if you follow it.

It is my prayer that our over 2000 Mississippi Baptist churches will be filled with the Holy Spirit and with people this Easter Sunday. HE IS ALIVE! HE IS ALIVE!

McKay is pastor of Spring Hill Church, Waterford.

Guidelines for submitting news and photographs

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant photos and digital printouts

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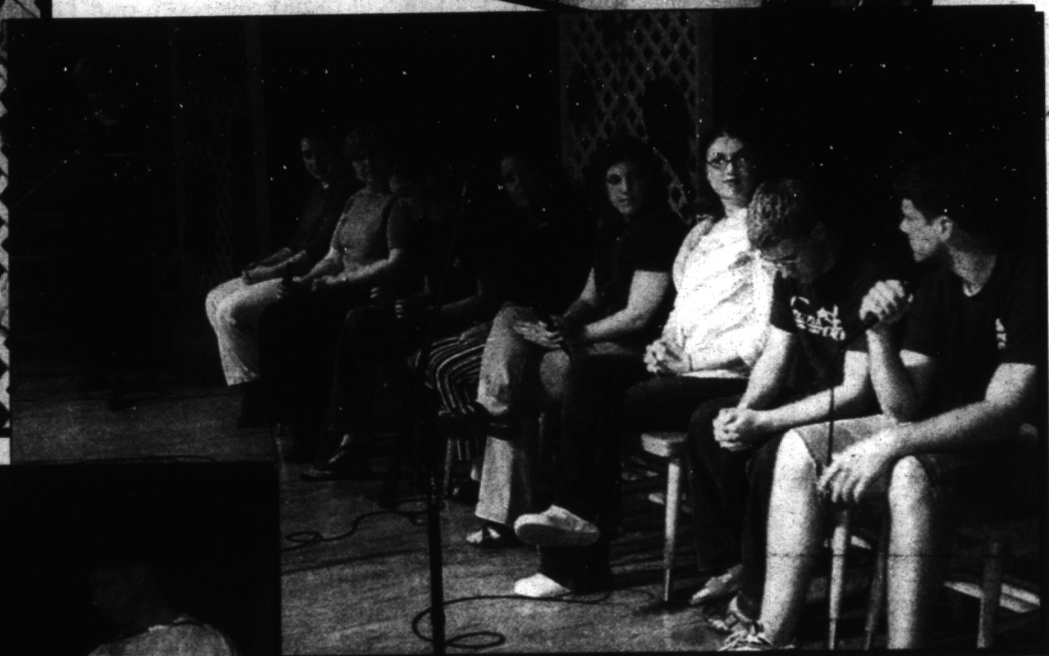
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Photos by William H. Perkins, Jr.